

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1955.

The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the December quarter of 1955 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases,
December Quarter, 1955.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from December Quarter, 1954.	Increase from September Quarter, 1955.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,223	157.6	2.1	0.1
Toowoomba ..	2,262	165.8	3.2	0.5
Rockhampton ..	2,263	162.8	3.0	0.2
Townsville ..	2,351	157.8	3.3	1.1
Bundaberg ..	2,216	163.5	2.5	0.6
Warwick ..	2,229	171.2	2.1	0.3

An increase of only 0.1 per cent. was recorded for the "C" Series index number for Brisbane for December quarter, 1955. This was the smallest rise shown during the whole of 1955. Since the steep price rises ceased in 1952 the general trend in retail prices has been upward to the extent of approximately 0.5 per cent. per quarter. Clothing and footwear prices have remained practically constant for the last three years, while food and grocery prices have been generally responsible for the fluctuations in the index. In the current quarter, however, there was a substantial increase in the fares component of the miscellaneous items section of the index but, in Brisbane, this was largely counter-balanced by a drop of 0.9 per cent. in food and grocery items.

All other Queensland cities for which the index numbers are calculated, except Bundaberg, had higher indexes than that for Brisbane, and in all these cities the increase in the latest quarter was greater than in Brisbane. The increases in these other cities ranged from 0.2 per cent. in Rockhampton to 1.1 per cent. in Townsville. Clothing and footwear prices fluctuated slightly in the provincial cities, the largest increase being 0.9 per cent. in Bundaberg while the largest decrease was 0.8 per cent. in Rockhampton. Owing to the increase in fares, miscellaneous items rose by approximately 3 per cent. in all cities.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, December Quarter, 1955.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1955.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	195.6	-0.9	278.3	-0.2	118.5	3.1
Toowoomba ..	219.4	-0.4	276.5	0.4	116.3	3.0
Rockhampton ..	189.2	-0.2	270.1	-0.8	128.5	2.8
Townsville ..	183.1	0.5	276.7	-0.1	127.4	2.8
Bundaberg ..	187.9	-0.4	276.2	0.9	113.5	3.0
Warwick ..	209.6	-0.5	280.2	-0.0	121.5	2.6

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, small decreases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for five of the six cities for which data are collected, the exception being Townsville which showed a slight increase. Decreases were recorded for the six cities in prices of potatoes and eggs, and in five of the cities milk prices also decreased when the winter incentive price was discontinued. This did not apply in Townsville where the price remained unaltered. Increases were recorded for the six cities in the prices of tea, onions, butter, and bacon, while prices of pork rose in all the cities except Townsville where they remained unchanged.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Small decreases were recorded for four of the six cities in the clothing and footwear index numbers during the quarter, but in Toowoomba and Bundaberg they increased slightly. The miscellaneous items index numbers showed increases for the six cities, the main cause of this being increases in Brisbane tram and bus fares (fares are collected in Brisbane only and the movements in these are applied to the other five cities).

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased by 4.0 per cent. in Townsville but remained stationary in the other five cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1955, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	10	$\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	8	$\frac{1}{2}$	19	11	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	3 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville	1	1	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	2	0	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	9 $\frac{3}{4}$
Bundaberg	19	11	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	16	3	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Warwick ..	1	0	0 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	7	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	0	1	1	4 $\frac{1}{4}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together increased during the quarter in the five provincial cities for which index numbers are calculated. The largest increase in these relative prices (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £) was recorded in Townsville and the smallest in Rockhampton ($\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £). Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey, while Bundaberg was still the cheapest and the only city where retail prices were lower than in Brisbane, the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane being 19s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. compared with £1 1s. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in Townsville.

The relative prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane. During December quarter the excess over Brisbane prices increased by amounts ranging from 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg and Warwick to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Townsville. Of the six cities, Townsville has still the highest food prices, food and groceries there costing 1s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ more than in Brisbane.

During the quarter prices of clothing and footwear in relation to Brisbane decreased by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Rockhampton and increased in the other four provincial cities by amounts up to 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg. Clothing and footwear prices are much more uniform throughout the State than prices of commodities in other sections of the index, and in the recent quarter the largest deviation from Brisbane prices was an excess of 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville.

Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane, although the additional costs decreased during December quarter in the five cities by amounts up to 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Warwick.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August 1953.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the index number for the September quarter of 1955, but no change was made following the practically unaltered index number for the December quarter of 1955.

The New South Wales State Industrial Court suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments after August 1953, but resumed them in November 1955, when the September quarter 1955 index number for Sydney indicated, according to the scale formerly in use, an increase of 10s. in the male adult wage rate since June quarter 1953. This was followed by an increase of 2s. from the first pay-period in February 1956. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments have been continued under special legislation, an increase of 5s. in the latest quarter having brought the total net increase in the adult male rate for Melbourne to 16s. since August 1953. In South Australia, the State basic wage has not been varied from the rate fixed in August 1953. In Western Australia, no adjustment was made to the basic wage from July 1953 until August 1955, when an increase of 5s. 11d. for males and 3s. 10d. for females was made in the adult rates for Perth, and a further increase of 1s. 3d. for males and 10d. for females was made from February 1956. In Tasmania, quarterly basic wage adjustments which had been suspended since August 1953 were resumed in February 1956, the increase in the index number for Hobart in the period since adjustments were suspended causing an addition of 17s. to the male basic wage.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	June Quarter, 1953.	Sept. Quarter, 1955.	Dec. Quarter, 1955.	Males. ^a			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. ^b
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,221	2,223	10	18	0	11	9	0	7	14	0	24. 10. 55
Sydney ..	2,360	2,455	2,471	12	3	0	12	15	0	9	11	0	Feb., 1956
Melbourne	2,279	2,392	2,436	11	15	0	12	11	0	9	8	3	Feb., 1956c
Adelaide	2,238	2,366	2,386	11	11	0	11	11	0	8	13	0	Aug., 1953
Perth ..	2,290	2,561	2,573	11	16	0	12	13	8	8	4	11	31. 1. 56
Hobart ..	2,351	2,467	2,511	12	2	0	12	19	0	9	14	3	Feb., 1956c

^a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

^b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

^c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed to a large extent until August, 1953. For subsequent adjustment see above.

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BRISBANE.

16th February, 1956.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.
Brisbane	863	1,079	2,211	2,178	2,195	2,206	2,221	2,223
Toowoomba	851	1,092	2,247	2,191	2,227	2,247	2,251	2,262
Rockhampton ..	861	1,084	2,253	2,198	2,238	2,251	2,259	2,263
Townsville	912	1,119	2,333	2,275	2,326	2,330	2,325	2,351
Bundaberg	841	1,059	2,202	2,161	2,188	2,200	2,202	2,216
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	2,225	2,186	2,209	2,220	2,233	2,237
Warwick	822	1,073	2,218	2,183	2,207	2,213	2,223	2,229

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.
Brisbane	856	971	2,526	2,456	2,502	2,518	2,553	2,530
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,595	2,480	2,572	2,599	2,610	2,600
Rockhampton ..	895	1,012	2,591	2,498	2,590	2,592	2,593	2,588
Townsville	955	1,057	2,702	2,607	2,712	2,699	2,691	2,704
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,607	2,530	2,606	2,609	2,611	2,600
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,549	2,473	2,530	2,544	2,570	2,552
Warwick	846	1,000	2,615	2,536	2,599	2,609	2,631	2,619

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.
Brisbane	829	1,454	3,141	3,135	3,133	3,150	3,143	3,136
Toowoomba	829	1,429	3,110	3,097	3,086	3,122	3,110	3,121
Rockhampton ..	845	1,477	3,142	3,116	3,127	3,163	3,151	3,127
Townsville	840	1,457	3,167	3,146	3,156	3,182	3,167	3,164
Bundaberg	839	1,447	3,129	3,100	3,098	3,133	3,128	3,156
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	3,140	3,131	3,130	3,151	3,143	3,137
Warwick	825	1,441	3,139	3,133	3,137	3,142	3,138	3,137